

A Mobile Health Clinic In Rural Oklahoma



*Dr. R. LeRoy Carpenter, Oklahoma
State health commissioner*

The promise of better health care for rural citizens is becoming a reality in McCurtain County, Okla., thanks to the Oklahoma State Department of Health's mobile health clinic.

Since McCurtain County has no intra-county bus or train service, before the mobile clinic was put into operation many people had to walk a long distance to the county health department. Most of the people served by the mobile clinic had never before received any type of health care. The services are provided free of charge.

Local newspapers carry notices of the clinic's schedule so that people in each community to be visited can plan to avail themselves of the services offered.

The clinic is manned by a public health nurse and a home health aide. In some communities, a school nurse also assists in the clinic.

Services offered include chest X-rays, diabetes screening, blood pressure measurements, various blood tests, tuberculin skin tests, glaucoma screening, family planning conferences, immunizations including diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, diphtheria-tetanus, rubella, and measles, and oral poliomyelitis vaccine. The glaucoma tests and chest X-rays are given in permanent facilities, such as schools, which usually are adjacent to the mobile unit.

During a recent 16-day period, 491 people were seen at the mobile clinic. The unit made 4-day stops at four communities in the county. The following services were provided: immunizations, 190 people; other types of injections, 19 people; chest X-rays, 266 people; diabetes screening, 225 people; glaucoma screening, 127 people; and blood pressure measurements, 14 people.

The public health nurses refer patients to other resources, such as private practitioners, when necessary. They also make followup visits to insure that patients are receiving care and to provide a continuum of care.

In the words of Dr. R. LeRoy Carpenter, State health commissioner, "The length of clinics in terms of days visited depends on community interest. This is an innovative type demonstration program which gives people the same services they could receive at the McCurtain County Health Department at Idabel. The great difference is that we are taking services to the people. This is great for those who have travel problems and for one reason or another cannot make a trip to the county health department."



Residents wait in line for health services offered by the McCurtain County Health Department

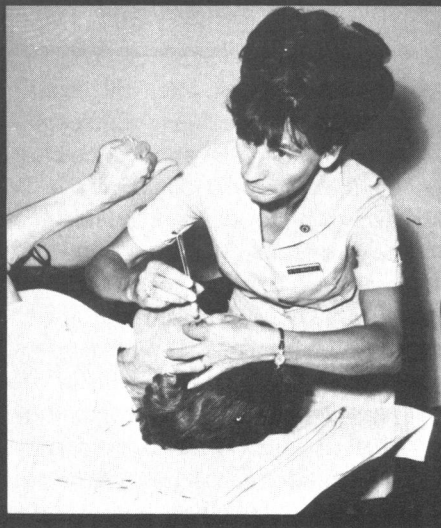
Erma Martin, home health aide, X-rays a student



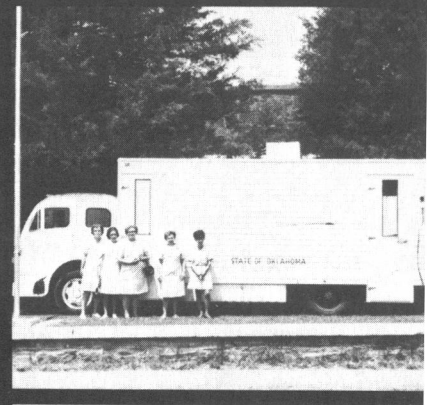
Sybil Coleman checks records of students as they receive services



Ruby Burnett, registered nurse, takes a blood sample for diabetes tests



Sybil Coleman, a registered nurse, checks Fay Harvey, a school nurse, for glaucoma



McCurtain County Health Department staff and community contact staff stand by the mobile unit

All photographs on this page were taken in the community of Valliant where the mobile clinic was stationed at the high school